

Message Text

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15

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9189

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 2455

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TW, CH

SUBJECT: PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

REF: STATE 080570

1. WANG MENG-HSIEN, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS, MOFA, CALLED IN DCM TO REITERATE ROC UNHAPPINESS WITH STATE DEPARTMENT BICENTENNIAL PICTORIAL EXHIBITION. WANG EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS AT FORMIN SHEN'S PERSONAL BEHEST THAT HE HAD REQUESTED DCM VISIT AND THAT FORMIN HAD "VERY STRONG FEELINGS" ON MATTER.

2. DCM WAS GIVEN TALKING POINTS PAPER QUOTED BELOW:

A. "REFERENCE IS MADE TO THE BICENTENNIAL PICTORIAL EXHIBITION ON AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS NOW TAKING PLACE AT THE LOBBY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. THE EXHIBITION DISPLAYS TWO PICTURES WITH RESPECT TO SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS--ONE CARRYING THE CAPTION 'CHINESE NATIONALIST FORCES LED BY CHIANG KAI-SHEK EXPELLED BY THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS UNDER MAO TSE-TUNG;' AND THE OTHER SHOWING A MEETING BETWEEN FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON AND MAO TSE-TUNG IN 1972.

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B. "IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT IN THE PICTORIAL PRESENTATION

MANY IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE TRADITIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED AND THAT WHAT HAS BEEN DISPLAYED IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE PROPRIETY OF THE INCLUSION OF A PICTURE SHOWING ONE FACET IN THE CIVIL WAR IS VERY QUESTIONABLE, SINCE THIS PARTICULAR FACET IS NOT QUITE RELEVANT TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE EXHIBITION ON SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

C. "IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT COULD SELECT SUCH PICTURES AS WOULD FULLY REFLECT THE TRADITIONAL TIES OF FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND BEFIT THE AUSPICIOUS AND HISTORIC OCCASION IT IS INTENDED TO CELEBRATE."

3. REFERRING TO ROC EMBASSY COUNSELOR HENRY WANG'S EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH BURT LEVIN IN DEPARTMENT (REFTEL), WANG ASSERTED THAT THE EXHIBITION "CANNOT BE INTERPRETED AS LACKING POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE," DESPITE MR. LEVIN'S DISCLAIMERS. THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF ANY DEPICTION OF THE U.S.-ROC RELATIONSHIP, IN WANG'S VIEW, WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN TO PEOPLE HERE IN TAIWAN. IT IS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY, FROM THE ROC'S POINT OF VIEW, THE INCLUSION OF A PICTURE PROTRAYING THE COMMUNIST VICTORY OVER THE NATIONALIST FORCES SINCE THIS WAS AN EVENT IN A CIVIL WAR, A CHINESE DOMESTIC ISSUE "NOT INVOLVING THE UNITED STATES."

4. WANG, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF FORMIN SHEN, REQUESTED EMBASSY TO SEEK REMEDIAL ACTION. HE ALSO ASKED WHEN ROC COULD EXPECT TO RECEIVE RESULTS OF INQUIRIES LEVIN HAD PROMISED TO MAKE DURING CONVERSATION WITH HENRY WANG.

5. BY WAY OF RESPONSE TO WANG'S PRESENTATION, DCM INFORMED HIM THAT EMBASSY AWARE OF COUNSELOR WANG'S CONVERSATION WITH LEVIN BUT HAD NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING PICTORIAL EXHIBITION. DCM AGREED TO CONVEY TO DEPARTMENT FORMIN SHEN'S DISPLEASURE AND CONCERN; HOWEVER DCM SAID NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE INFERENCE THAT ANY MODIFICATIONS IN EXHIBITION CONTENT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING.

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6. COMMENT: INCLUSION OF PICTURE DEPICTING COMMUNIST CIVIL WAR VICTORY HAS APPEARANCE OF GRATUITOUS INSULT TO ROC WHICH ONLY CONFOUNDED BY ABSENCE ANY DISPLAY OF U.S.-ROC WARTIME RELATIONSHIP. IF, IN MAKING UP THE EXHIBITION, NO CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO POSSIBLE POLITICAL CONNOTATIONS, EMBASSY CAN ONLY SAY THAT IT WAS A GRIEVOUS OVERSIGHT.
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